

NETLEY ABBEY:

A

GOthic STORY.

“Avaunt, and quit my sight! Let the earth hide thee!
“Thy bones are marrowless, thy blood is cold;
“Thou hast no speculation in those eyes,
“Which thou dost glare with.”

MACBETH.

IN TWO VOLUMES,

VOL. II.

SOUTHAMPTON:

PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR,

BY T. SKELTON.

AND

SOLD BY C. LAW, AVE MARY LANE, LONDON.

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Lady Darnley

NETLEY ABBEY.

CHAP. XI.

AS soon as the first tinge of day appeared, young de Villars arose, and began to prepare himself for his meditated expedition. The only difficulty was, in disguising himself so effectually that he might not be known to father Peter, or the porter of the abbey. As, however, he had only been once seen by them, on the evening of his visiting that monastery,

VOL. II. B nastery,

nastery, he trusted his person was not so accurately observed, as to be discovered under the habit of a strolling minstrel. He therefore equipped himself, and was prepared early in the afternoon to set out.

His dress consisted of a long loose gown of bright green, gathered at the neck and fastened with a silver clasp. A crimson girdle encircled his waist. Round his neck he wore a silver chain, from which depended a small scutcheon of the same metal, embossed with the arms of the college to which he was supposed to belong. On one side of his girdle hung the wrest, or key
of



of his harp, on the other, a neat silver mounted dagger. His luxuriant locks were concealed under a close cap that came low upon his forehead. An harp, slung over the left shoulder depended before him; and a pilgrim's staff supported his steps.

Thus disguised he presented himself to the baron, who confirmed the improbability of his being discovered, by the surprise he shewed at the singular alteration which this garb had produced in the appearance of his son. He was fully of opinion he might venture to the monastery without danger of detection; he therefore gave him his blessing

sing, and dismissed him, saying;
"Go my child, and God grant thee
success. May he be thy guardian
and director in this undertaking,
and endow thee with fortitude and
prudence to fulfil properly his wise
and unsearchable behests." Ed-
ward also breathed a silent prayer
to the same effect; and full of ar-
dour and confidence departed cheer-
fully from the castle.

ELEANOR had risen early on the
morning of the day succeeding the
adventure at Netley castle. A thou-
sand anxieties prayed upon her mind,
and disturbed her usual placid slum-
bers. The recollection of the stran-
ger would perpetually cross her
thoughts;

thoughts; and tho' she endeavoured to reason herself out of the absurdity of dwelling on the remembrance of one whom perhaps she should never see again, yet her heart tacitly told her, his image was too deeply impressed there, to be erased or obliterated by all the arguments of reason. The threats of sir Hildebrand would then recur, and fill her with dread; which was by no means lessened at the apprehension of her still being persecuted by his odious addresses. Somewhat also of mystery appeared in the conduct of the baron and his son; she could not help remarking their unusual bustle and agitation, and her fears as well as curiosity were awakened

by seeing her brother in a disguise, new, strange, and unaccountable.

THE more she reflected on these various circumstances, the more her uneasiness encreased. She wished for an opportunity of unbosoming her anxiety to some one; thus in a degree to lighten its load. Edward, however, was gone, and de Villars had shut himself up in his apartment. She therefore resolved to communicate her emotions to the trusty Beatrice, and accordingly desired she would attend her in a walk thro' the wood which lay at the back of the castle. Thither they repaired, and soon penetrated far into its solemn glooms.

DE

Dr Villars had retired to his chamber, to indulge reflection, and give a free scope to his melancholy. It was to the anniversary of that awful day, which had snatched from him the partner of his soul. Several years were now elapsed since this cruel loss; yet the remembrance of it was still fresh in his mind. Time had indeed blunted the arrow of affliction, but nothing could extract it from his heart. It had been his constant custom, ever since the decease of the baroness, to devote the day of her dissolution to solitary sorrow, and the contemplation of his own mortality; and his orders were, that no one, upon these occasions

cations, should interrupt his privacy. It was for this reason that Eleanor would not disturb her father when she found he was shut up in his chamber; she recollected the purpose of his retirement, and esteemed his grief too sacred to be broken in upon.

THE baron, however, did not exhaust these hours of seclusion in unavailing tears or passionate exclamations. Something might be allowed to the weakness of human nature on such a sad occasion, but the gush of affliction would be but transient; reason would soon resume its place, and resignation again compose the tumults of his soul. Religion would
lend

lend her friendly aid, and bid him look forward to that happy period, when he again should meet the dear departed, and meet to part no more. She too would lift his mind to thankfulness and gratitude, for the kindness of heaven in having spared to him his children, the props of his declining age. In Edward he beheld every virtue that his fondest wish could fancy; and in the blooming Eleanor all those amiable qualities which had endeared her mother to his soul.

CONTEMPLATIONS of this nature engaged de Villars; "Oh!" exclaimed he, "sacred shade of the departed Isabel, if thy pure spirit can
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e're bend a thought to earthly things,
sure it must gaze with complacency
on thy virtuous offspring; Edward
the gallant and the good; and Elea-
nor whose soul reflects all thy per-
fections. Perchance, e'en now thou
hoverest round them, and delightest
to make their safety thy particular
charge."

He had just uttered these words,
when he was alarmed by the cries
of a female in the hall. It was the
voice of Beatrice. A sudden and
prophetic horror chilled his soul, and
he rushed from the apartment to en-
quire the cause of her distress. She
had fainted when he arrived; but
immediately recovering, de Villars
ex-

exclaimed, "where is my child, my Eleanor?" The violence of Beatrice's grief prevented her from answering. The baron half distracted with apprehension, repeated his question; "where is your mistress? Is my child in safety?" "Alas! my lord, sobbed out Beatrice she is lost—gone for ever!"—"Merciful God!" returned de Villars, "what dost thou say? Who has robbed me of my darling? What horrible misfortune has torn my Eleanor from her father's bosom, and burst my aged heart?"—"My lord," replied Beatrice, "I will endeavour to compose myself, and relate the circumstances of the disaster which has befallen my beloved mistress; but alas! I fear I ne'er shall see her more."—

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"Be quick then;" said the baron.—
"My lord," resumed Beatrice, "early this afternoon the lady Eleanor ordered me to attend her in a walk through yonder wood.—I obeyed; and we proceeded for a considerable time in a direction from the castle, being so much occupied by conversation, and the various beauties around us, as not to consider the distance we had strayed. Your daughter, my lord, at length observed that it might be prudent to return. We had scarcely, however, began to retrace our road, when the noise of horsemen alarmed us; and looking back to discover who they were, there appeared too ill-favored men in the habits of servants, mounted on black horses. On seeing
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us, they immediately rode up ; and one of them looking stedfastly at the lady Eleanor, exclaimed with a tremendous oath, “ this is the object of our search.”—Both now alighted from their horses, and one seized my mistress, the other myself. We were dreadfully alarmed, and made the woods echo with our cries ; the brutes, however, soon deprived us of these means of calling assistance, by gagging our mouths. Having done this, they next secured our hands, binding them firmly behind us. The one who had first spoken, now took my beloved lady in his arms, and lifted her upon the horse ; after which he mounted himself, and rode off at a smart pace. The other villain hav-

ing, as he thought, sufficiently secured my hands, took another cord from his doublet, and passing it round my waist, bound me to a tree; "there," cried he, "as you are partial to the woods, I leave you to enjoy the scene at your leisure;" saying this, he clapped spurs to his horse, and followed his comrade.

"GRIEF and terror lent me, I believe, extraordinary strength; for after struggling some little time, I loosened the knots which fastened my hands, and at length liberated both. I instantly removed the gag from my mouth, and the rope from my waist, and returned to the castle with the utmost expedition, that I
might

might communicate the mournful event to your lordship. Heaven knows whither the ruffians have carried my unhappy mistress; but the road they took was that which leads to Netley castle."

A VIOLENT shower of tears again gushed from the eyes of Beatrice, and prevented her continuing the melancholy subject. Her last words, however, gave de Villars an idea of the extent of his misfortune. It instantly occurred to his mind, that sir Hildebrand Warren was the author of this violence. The general profligacy of his character; his conduct at the tournament; and the obscure menaces he had then thrown

out, were circumstances which confirmed his suspicions beyond a doubt. "Execrable villain," exclaimed he, in a voice choaked with agony, "to tear from my arms the staff of my sinking years, and rob me of the only solace of my woes! Curses light upon thee, thou spoiler of my peace! May heaven's blackest vengeance pursue thy steps, and speedy punishment reward thy hellish treachery. But let me not," continued de Villars, "consume the time in useless execrations; myself will follow the villain, and snatch my daughter from dishonor. What tho' my arm has lost its former vigor; heaven which cannot behold such baseness with indifference, will perhaps

perhaps nerve it with unusual strength, and enable me to regain my Eleanor. But should its decree be otherwise, it will still be some consolation to my spirit, that my heart's blood was spilt in the attempt. Robert," continued the baron to his old domestic, whom the alarm had brought into the hall, "thou wilt not forsake thy lord in this moment of his anguish—bring hither my armour, and let us haste, to the deliverance of my wretched child; would to God that Edward were here to assist our endeavours."

ROBERT bowed obedience to de Villars's commands, and retired to execute them. He would indeed

have represented the impropriety of attempting the rescue of the lady Eleanor by force, had he not perceived his lord's grief was too violent to listen to the cool suggestions of prudence. He knew that sir Hildebrand Warren's numerous retainers would render vain all the exertions of de Villars and himself; and he foresaw the danger of attempting any thing in a hostile manner against so disproportionate a power. But Robert's had been a service of affection, not of bondage; he loved his lord, and therefore did not hesitate complying with his orders, tho' it was nearly certain that the execution of them must prove fatal to them both.

IN

IN a short space the baron and his attendant were properly equipped, and set out towards the castle of sir Hildebrand. As they rode through the wood, whither de Villars had often wandered with his gentle Eleanor, every tree, every glade brought her to his remembrance. The tears rolled down his cheeks, and his bosom swelled with agonizing emotions, while busy recollection painted her to him in each little act of affection and duty; soothing him with her own conversation, or listening with fond attention to his. His soul was absorbed by the most profound grief, and he had imperceptibly reached the extremity of the wood, when his attention was roused by the cry of Robert,

bert, who in a tone of extacy exclaimed, "my lord, my lord, behold the lady Eleanor!"

DE Villars now cast his eyes forwards, but what words can express the sensations of his bosom when he perceived at a small distance, his daughter and a knight in armour, both on foot, and directing their steps towards him. In the wildness of excessive joy he threw himself from his horse, and had almost reached the object of his search, before she observed his approach. A shriek of delight was the first symptom which Eleanor gave of recollecting her parent; she rushed towards him, and sunk senseless into his arms.

DE

DE Villars was too much overcome with conflicting emotions to be able to assist in restoring her senses; but the knight, unclasping his helmet, hastened to an adjoining brook, and laving a little of the water from it, soon recalled her to life and recollection.

THE first few minutes of returning reason were consumed by de Villars and his daughter, in mutual gratulations; and it was sometime before the former could sufficiently collect himself to pay any attention to Eleanor's companion. At length, however, he turned towards him, and was on the point of enquiring by what extraordinary means he had rescued his
child

child from the danger with which she was threatened, when he discovered, by the color of his armour, the device of his shield, and the azure scarf which he wore, that the youth before him was no other than the gallant stranger who had so signally displayed his skill and prowess at the tournament of sir Hildebrand Warren.—“ Knight,” said the baron, “ pardon me for having thus long omitted to express my obligations, at being once more put into possession of the treasure of my soul ; for I cannot doubt but that to your gallantry, I owe the recovery of my child. My admiration and esteem you acquired at Netley castle ; accept now my gratitude and friendship,

ship, the poor returns for an obligation that never can be cancelled.— But come fir knight, let us proceed to my mansion, and indulge me, on our walk, with the particulars of this unhopd for event.”

THE youth returned his acknowledgments to de Villars for his kindness ; he assured him that in rescuing the lady Eleanor from violence, and giving her back to her father, he felt the most lively pleasure ; that, however, as he had now placed her under secure and proper protection, it was necessary for him to depart ; he had affairs of a nature the most important to execute, which would not admit of delay ; but that should
it

it please heaven to grant him success in the undertaking which then engaged his attention, he would speedily pay his respects in person at the castle of de Villars.

THE baron saw it would be in vain to press the stranger further, to accompany Eleanor and himself to their dwelling; once more therefore he repeated the dictates of his gratitude, and fervently pressing his hand, bade him adieu; the knight taking a graceful leave of his companions, turned about, and walked hastily towards the extremity of the wood.

ON his departure, the first enquiries of the baron were relative
to

to the escape of his daughter from the villains who had surprised Beatrice and herself; he informed her of what particulars he was already apprised, together with his own suspicions as to the original author of this piece of perfidy; and requested she would continue the detail from the moment of her separation from her attendant.

“My lord,” replied Eleanor, “I was so alarmed by the sudden and ferocious appearance of the horsemen, their threatening language, and boisterous treatment, that for some minutes after one of them had bound, and placed me on his horse, I lost my recollection entirely, and sunk

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into insensibility. On my recovery, I perceived we had already emerged from the wood, and had entered the road which leads to the castle of sir Hildebrand Warren. My real situation at once flashed upon my mind; I saw myself the victim of a wretch whose vicious soul was equal to the undertaking of any villainy, and whose power gave him the opportunity of executing it with impunity. I was unable to interest the compassion or attention of my conductor by prayers, or promises, as he had taken care to render me incapable of speech by gagging my mouth; and the rapidity of our motion convinced me that a short time would convey

convey me to the place of destination.—Great God! what agony shook my bosom, what despair filled my soul, when I heard the other villain, who had joined us, exclaim to his companion; there was now no danger to be feared; he had silenced my attendant, and her mistress would be soon safely lodged in Netley castle.”——

“I LIFTED up my streaming eyes to heaven, and silently implored the protection of the most high, whose arm alone I thought could now save me from destruction. The guardian of the wretched heard my petition, and at that moment, a knight appeared on horseback from

a little covert, to the right of the road. The hope of relief gave me preternatural strength; I freed my right arm from the cord which bound it, and snatching the instrument from my mouth, uttered a loud and piercing shriek.

“ THIS sound of distress caught the stranger’s attention, and he instantly turned his horse towards us. My conductor, in the mean time, ordered the other horseman to precede him, and to endeavour to persuade the knight not to obstruct his progress; but, if he should prove obstinate, to attack him without further ceremony. At the same time he assured me, with the most horrible

rible oaths, that should I continue my cries it would be the worse for me when I arrived at his lord's mansion.

"UNMINDFUL however, of his menaces, I redoubled my entreaties for the assistance of the knight, who I now discovered to be the same that had overcome sir Hildebrand in the tournament. In a few minutes he reached the first horseman.—Their conversation was but momentary. Almost instantly unsheathing their swords, they attacked each other fiercely; but after a short conflict, the stranger cleft his antagonist to the ground.—The moment my conductor perceived the fate of his

companion, fearing a similar one himself, he loosened the string which bound me to my saddle, and spurring his horse with great rage, the animal gave a sudden start, that threw me with violence to the ground.—I was stunned with the fall; the attentions, however, of my deliverer, who had dismounted from his palfrey, soon restored me; and I had the satisfaction of finding when I recovered, that the surviving villain was already out of sight.

“THE knight endeavoured to compose the evident tumult of my spirits, which had been greatly agitated with this quick succession of extraordinary events,

events, by every means in his power. He bade me consider myself as now perfectly safe ; that he would protect me at the hazard of his existence ; nor would he forsake his charge till he had again restored me to the arms of my honored parent. This promise, my lord, he was performing, when the happy and unexpected meeting with yourself, made any further trouble on his part unnecessary.”

De Villars listened to the detail of his daughter, with mingled emotions of terror, wonder, delight, and gratitude. Casting his eye to heaven, he breathed his pious thanks to the great disposer of human affairs for the unlooked for deliverance of his child ;

child; then, after some minutes pause, he thus addressed her. "Eleanor, I have been revolving in my mind, the singular events which have this day befallen you, and their probable consequences. The former, thanks be to heaven, have terminated happily; but the latter, I fear, are teeming with danger to us all. Sir Hildebrand Warren, the contriver of this attack on the peace of our family, will not be deterred from further attempts by this disappointment. I know his rancorous, his relentless heart; I know too his power, which we are utterly unable to resist. E'er this time he is probably acquainted with the ill-success of his scheme, and the means by which it was defeated;

feated; and may have already formed some new plan, more violent, more certain of succeeding.

“NOTHING then, my child, is left for us, but speedy flight from England. My enquiries relative to the barons who were said to have confederated together against the vicious government of the king’s favorite, have been hitherto without effect; that safety therefore which I had secretly looked to from their protection, I must cease now to hope for. In my native land, it is probable I shall still find some connections, some friends of the de Villars family remaining, who may extend their assistance to my fallen branch; but

but should I be unknown or forgotten there, it will yet be better to sink into quiet and happy poverty in a spot where our domestic peace shall be secure, than continue here in comparative affluence, exposed to the attempts of a powerful villain. Let tomorrow night then, my child, be the time of our departure; be it your care to collect together whatever may be of use to us in our retirement; myself and Edward will by that time have prepared a vessel to transport us to the coast of Normandy."

Eleanor heard her father with mingled pleasure and pain; to fly from the violence of the hateful sir
Hilde-

Hildebrand Warren could not but be agreeable to her; yet, when she reflected that in leaving her country, she lost, at the same time, all hope of ever again beholding her deliverer; him to whom she had surrendered her virgin heart, to whom she was bound by the strongest ties of gratitude and love, she felt that acute sensation of distress, with which the anticipation of perpetual absence from the object of regard, will wring the bosom of disinterested affection.

PARENTAL obedience, however, was a leading principle in Eleanor's soul; she respectfully agreed in the propriety of the baron's plans, and with a well-counterfeited appearance
of

of cheerfulness, endeavoured to dissipate her father's gloom, during the remainder of their walk to the castle.

CHAP. XII.

IT will now be necessary for us to return to Edward, and attend him in his expedition to the abbey.

THAT he might be the less liable to discovery, he had determined not to visit this religious house till towards evening; and accordingly amused himself the better part of the afternoon, in wandering through the deep woods with which it was surrounded. Agitated by hope, fear, expectation, and curiosity, the time passed but slowly to the youth; at length, however, he beheld the

mellow tints of the setting sun, glittering through the opening glades, and leaving his retirement, he proceeded to the monastery.

Twice he lifted the massive knocker of the gate, without resolution to demand admittance. The consciousness of his disguise, and of the dissimulative part which he was preparing to act, took from him, in a degree, that confidence which the dignity of ingenuousness will ever inspire. When, however, he reflected on the uprightness of his intentions, and the extraordinary occurrences he had witnessed, that seemed to call him to the adventure in which he was engaged, his wonted composure

composure returned, and raising his arm a third time, he thundered loudly at the portal.

ONE of the brethren immediately obeyed the summons, and, opening the gate, enquired his business. "Friend," replied the youth, "I am as thou seest, a travelling minstrel. In journeying to the castle of sir Hildebrand Warren, I have been bewildered in the mazes of these woods, and am fallen, by accident, on your abbey. As the shades of night are now descending, I crave the hospitality of your order; refreshment for my exhausted frame, and a bed for my repose." "Brother," said the

E 2 monk,

monk, " my lord abbot will be right glad of your arrival ; 'tis long since our retirement has been enlivened by the merry tones of a minstrel's harp." Saying this he took Edward by the hand, and led him to the refectory where the abbot was seated. He received the youth cordially ; and, without appearing at all to suspect his disguise, bid him heartily welcome.

THE occasional relaxation, indeed, of the minstrel, was almost the only sort of amusement permitted to the monastics of these ages ; and as this varied agreeably the dull monotony of their indolent lives, the temporary visits of this profession, were always
received

received with pleasure and satisfaction.

It was not long before Edward was required to give a specimen of his art; a request which he readily complied with, to the great delight of his attentive audience. Father Peter was particularly gratified; he had little that was spiritual about him, his retirement from the world, having been dictated entirely by selfish motives. Profligate and licentious in principle, but without riches to indulge his propensities, he easily saw that his means of gratification would increase, by entering into a profession, that promised, from the circumstances of

the times, affluence, leisure, and safety to its members. In fir Hildebrand Warren, he found a patron exactly to his taste; and as abbot of Netley, with a society of monks devoted to his service, had enjoyed ample opportunities of perpetrating almost every crime, which can stain human nature.

THE excesses of the table were amongst the abbot's vices; and as the popular ballads which Edward recited had given him an unusual flow of spirits, the bowls of wine, by his example, circulated very briskly. This our disguised youth encouraged as much as possible, excusing himself, at the same time, from

from joining in their frequent potations; an abstinence that afforded no little entertainment to the brethren of the convent.

MIDNIGHT at length approached, and Edward was happy to hear the abbot, in accents scarcely articulate from intoxication, give directions to a lay-brother to shew the minstrel to his chamber. Thither he retired, and seating himself upon the bed, resolved to wait patiently till such time as the whole convent should be wrapt in slumber, before he commenced his search. We may readily suppose that this interval of suspense was not passed without anxiety. The novelty of his situation, the uncertainty

tainty of success, the danger of detection, all conspired to agitate his mind; and the bell of the convent tolled one, ere he had sufficiently collected himself to proceed to the execution of his plan. At length, however, he started from his seat, and taking the taper in his left hand, and the dagger in his right, he softly left his chamber.

Not knowing to what particular spot to direct his steps, he followed the windings of a passage which faced the room he came from. As this led him by the dormitories of the monks, he was obliged to use all his caution lest the sound of his footsteps should awaken the sleeping brethren.

brethren. Having passed these, the cloisters next presented themselves, through which the wind roared in fullen murmurs. Edward hesitated for a moment, whether he should traverse this dreary pile, or confine his scrutiny to the body of the building, and had already formed a determination to return, when a sudden crash like the bursting open of a door, at the extremity of the cloister, excited his curiosity, and impelled him to proceed.

THE wind was so violent that he could with difficulty prevent his taper from being extinguished; he walked carefully to the spot whence the noise seemed to come, and soon perceived

perceived it was occasioned by the recoil of a small door, which not being locked, had been blown open by a sudden gust of air.

A LONG and narrow passage here displayed itself, but the dimness of his taper did not allow him an opportunity of seeing to what it led. He resolved, notwithstanding, to discover its termination, and entered it accordingly; but scarce had he proceeded three paces, before a second blast of wind again closed the door, extinguished the light, and left Edward in perfect darkness.

HORROR, for a moment, seized him, when, on feeling for the wicket,

wicket, he perceived the spring of the lock had caught on its return, and that he was irremediably confined within the passage.—A conviction of imminent danger, without being able to ascertain its nature or source, is the most terrifying of all mental emotions; the imagination, not confined by any definite idea, hurries into the wildest extravagance, and pictures horrors which can only exist in the whims of fancy.—Conscious rectitude, however, soon calmed the tumult of Edward's bosom; he breathed an ejaculation to heaven, and determined to proceed. Placing his hand therefore against the wall, he walked cautiously on, regretting now the misfortune which
had

had occurred, only as it threatened to deprive him of all further opportunity of prosecuting his search.

He continued pacing the passage in this deliberate manner some time, when his ear was suddenly surprised by the faint sound of instrumental harmony. The youth listened attentively; in a few moments the notes were repeated, accompanied by a female voice, which died away in a cadence ravishingly sweet.

ASTONISHMENT and delight fixed him to the spot on which he stood; again he called up his attention, and a third time the united melody thrilled

led on his ear, and gradually sunk into silence as before. The dream, with all its circumstances, now rushed on Edward's mind; he doubted not that the mystery which had so long perplexed him, was about to be unfolded, and panting with expectation, he again proceeded.

ALL, once more, was silence and darkness; he moved on however, till his progress was impeded by something against which his foot struck, with a shock that nearly overthrew him. Stooping down to ascertain what it might be, he found it was a massive trap door, so warped by time or weather, as to render it incapable of being closely shut. This he endea-

voured to lift up, though for some time without effect.

SUMMONING at length all his power into one exertion, he raised the ponderous slab, and immediately discovered, by a faint gleam of light which streamed thro' the aperture, a flight of stone stairs, terminating in another passage. These he descended without hesitation; and scarcely had reached the bottom, e're he was again ravished with the harmonious sounds he had before heard, which now burst more rich, full, and clearly on his ear.

A SMALL door with an iron grating in it, (which emitted the imperfect

perfect light that had enabled Edward to descend the stairs) appeared at the end of the passage. He advanced softly towards it, his heart palpitating with unutterable emotions. But what was his astonishment and rapture, when, on looking through the grate, he beheld the real form of the enchanting female, whose portrait his fancy had presented to him in the visions of the night.

FOR a moment he doubted the evidence of his eyes, and could not avoid believing himself the dupe of a fervent imagination. A short time, however, restored his recollection, and enabled him to observe minutely the scene before him.

THE room or cell into which the grated door afforded entrance, appeared to be a square of about twelve feet, vaulted above, but without any opening to admit the light of day. In one corner of it might be seen another wicket, communicating apparently with an inner apartment. The furniture consisted merely of a table and chair; both of the most homely workmanship; on the former of which stood an ivory crucifix, and a lighted waxen taper. In short the appearance of the whole together, indicated the apartment to be a subterraneous prison. But what attracted Edward's attention most particularly, was, the interesting figure who seemed to be
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the only inhabitant of this gloomy abode. She was seated at the table, and held a lute in her hand; the strings of which she swept in the most graceful manner, warbling at the same time an evening hymn to the blessed virgin. Her age appeared to be about nineteen; she was of the middle size, but fashioned with the nicest symmetry. Her countenance was open, ingenuous and lovely; her complexion clear, dazzling, and transparent; her eye dark, animated, and intelligent. Luxuriant ringlets of auburn hair fell carelessly over her shoulders, and served as a beautiful contrast to the snowy whiteness of a bosom which nature had modelled with all her care.

EDWARD gazed on this image of perfection without the power of utterance; his bosom soon acknowledged an emotion hitherto unknown to him, that indescribable passion produced by a combination of all the finer sensibilities in our nature.—Totally absorbed in rapturous contemplation, he would perhaps, have continued some time thus uselessly silent, had he not been roused by a shriek which came from the lady, who had accidentally lifted up her eyes, and been terrified by the appearance of a strange face at the grate. Edward, hurt at the alarm which he thus involuntarily excited, immediately endeavoured to dissipate it; “lovely pattern of excellence,” said he,

he, "let not your bosom entertain a fear on my account. In me you behold the son of baron de Villars, the protector of innocence, the reliever of distress.—Heaven has sent me hither to be the instrument of your deliverance, and my blood shall gladly be spilt in the glorious adventure."

THESE words he uttered with all the warmth and energy of truth, nor did the fair stranger hesitate at giving immediate credit to them. Guilt alone can entertain suspicion; but as the former had not stained her soul, the latter could meet with no reception there. "Generous youth," returned the lady, "pardon the involun-

voluntary expression of surprise which your unexpected appearance drew from me.—Long since alas ! have I beheld that grating only with horror and affright, since every face which it presented to my view was that of a deadly foe. Your benevolent offer of assistance I receive with gratitude unspeakable ; nor will the son of de Villars find that I am an object altogether unworthy of his notice or compassion.—But,” continued she, after a moment’s pause, “ your attempt must be, I fear, in vain, since the door which confines me within this horrible dungeon, is fastened by a lock too strong for our united strength to break.”

EDWARD

EDWARD, for the first time, examined the fastening, which, to his mortification, he found was a ponderous lock, that threw its bolt into the stone lintel of the door-way. For some time he endeavoured, by various artifices, to force it back, but without effect. At length the dagger occurred to his recollection, This he introduced into the cavity which received the bolt, and pressing it hard upon the end of the latter, it flew back, and the door grated on its hinges.

EDWARD now entered the chamber, and approaching the lady, he again assured her, in the most respectful terms, of his real character, and
determined

determined resolution to deliver her at the hazard of his life. "But come," continued he, "fair maid, let us escape without delay from these gloomy regions; the convent is still wrapt in slumber, and we may now retire unobserved from its walls." Mingled emotions agitated the mind of the lady, and disabled her from replying; she gave her hand, however, to the son of de Villars with all the confidence of virtue, and quitted the scene of her confinement.

TAKING the taper from the table, Edward retraced his road, till they came to the door which had been closed by the violence of the wind.

With

With the assistance of the light and dagger, he soon managed to open this also; and repassing the cloisters, quickly arrived at the great gate of the monastery.—But here a difficulty occurred, of which he had not been aware, the fastenings of this were so massive, that he in vain endeavoured to remove them by the means he had employed in his two similar attempts—and all violence was precluded, by the fear of disturbing the sleeping monks. In this dilemma, his fair companion accidentally casting her eye to the wall at the right of the gate, discovered a small niche, and looking into it, beheld the keys, which were accustomed to be deposited there
for

for the convenience of the porter. She instantly communicated the important discovery to Edward, who snatching them down, applied them to the locks, and softly opening the convent gate, led his charge without the walls. He then once more turned the keys, and hid them under a stone, that, in case of an alarm, the monks might not be able to make an immediate pursuit.

THE agitation of the lady during these critical moments was extreme; the fear of being discovered e'er they could effect a retreat, and being again immured in the dreadful dungeon she had left shook her with alarm; and the idea of the

the danger to which young de Villars would be exposed, in case of a surprize, (whose figure and manners had already made the most pleasing impressions on her mind,) added to the generous girl's distress. Edward, however, as soon as he had relocked the gate, endeavoured to dissipate her alarm, with every assurance of safety and protection. The baron's mansion, he observed, was but at a small distance from the abbey; thither he would lead her in a short time, and present her to those who should make her future happiness their care.—“But let me intreat you,” said he “fair sufferer, to indulge me with a detail of the circumstances that placed you in the

terrible abode from which I have had the happiness to deliver you. What obdurate villany, what monstrous cruelty, could e'er treat such excellence so undeservedly?" "Pardon me, gallant youth," returned the lady, "if I do not now comply with your request.—My story is long, and melancholy; nor do I find myself equal, in the present tumult of my spirits, to relate its mournful particulars.—On the morrow I will willingly unfold it; when the baron, your father, who I full well know will be interested in the narrative, may have an opportunity of hearing it."

EDWARD, of course, immediately
waved

waved his wish; and turning the discourse to indifferent subjects, agreeably whiled away the time till he brought his charge to the castle of de Villars.—On his arrival, he called up the domestics, and having desired Beatrice to awaken her mistress, had soon an opportunity of recommending the fair stranger to Eleanor. He then bade them both adieu, and retired to his chamber.

CHAP. XIII.

THE occurrences of the night occupied entirely the mind of Edward, and effectually prevented him from taking repose.—Hopes and fears alternately arose in his bosom, with respect to the lady whom he had delivered from the abbey; and on whom he now found his future happiness must depend. Agitated with these emotions he quitted his pillow early in the morning, and went to the chamber of the baron, to acquaint him with the events which had happened.

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DE Villars, full of the resolution to retire immediately to the continent, and anxious for the return of his son, was already risen. He felt therefore greatly relieved, when he saw him approach with a countenance that bespoke success and satisfaction. The detail which he gave the baron, filled him with astonishment; nor was Edward less surprised, when he understood the daring attempt that had been made on the honor of his family by sir Hildebrand Warren, and the consequent determination of de Villars to depart that night from England.—For a moment he entertained the rash idea of instantly seeking the castle of the knight, and challenging him to single

combat, that he might punish his reiterated insults. The baron, however, soon pointed out the dangerous folly of this plan; and assured him that a temporary absence at least from their present situation, would be the most certain means of future safety and quiet. Edward bowed an assent to his father's opinions, and accompanied him to the breakfasting room.

It was late before Eleanor and her fair charge appeared. The door at length opened, and the stranger entered covered with a veil that concealed her whole face. De Villars rose to receive her, to offer his protection, and the hospitality of his castle.

castle. As he approached her, the lady threw back her veil, and falling on her knee, burst into tears; "save me, save me, de Villars," cried she, "from the machinations of fir Hildebrand Warren, that enemy of my peace. Already has your generous daughter acquainted me with his base conduct towards her, and your resolution of immediately retiring beyond the reach of his infernal malice.—Oh! suffer then an unprotected suppliant to be the companion of your flight, nor leave the unfortunate Agnes Warren to the merciless fury of her unnatural cousin."

"GRACIOUS heaven!" exclaimed the baron, "art thou the daughter
of

of my much-regretted friend the good sir Raymond? Yes—full well I trace his softened likenesses in that face, which beams with all his generous virtues.—But rise fair maid, and rest assured that while de Villars breathes, Agnes Warren shall not want a father.—Pardon, however, my curiosity, if I request to know by what strange events I have the pleasure of seeing the daughter of my friend, after rumour had announced her death upwards of two years ago? The report which notified your father's decease, added, that you fell a sacrifice at the same time to the same malignant complaint."

"ALAS," replied Agnes, with a
deep

deep sigh, "the public ear was cheated with a perfidious lie fabricated by the unnatural sir Hildebrand.—Would to God my honored parent had fallen a victim to the stroke of quick disorder; he had not then experienced these bitter pains which a tedious lingering, and horrible dissolution by famine, must produce.—Great God! how do I live to tell the fearful tale? to say these eyes beheld my parent pale, wan, emaciated, starving; myself without the ability to afford him sustenance.—Even now his last sad look is present to my mind; his last, weak sigh, still vibrates on my ear.—And thou too Raymond, my friend, my brother, my protector; long e'er this, has
the

the remorseless usurper of your rights, compleated his vengeance with thy blood !”

A TORRENT of tears fell from Agnes on this retrospect of her distresses; she continued silent for a few moments, and then proceeded.—“ But pardon, my lord, this tribute to affection.—I have promised to the generous youth who rescued me from confinement, that I would relate the circumstances of my story. Should your lordship feel inclined to hear a tale of wretchedness, I will endeavour to perform the ungrateful task.” The baron, his son, and daughter, whose curiosity was equally excited, all pressed their guest to
begin

begin, which she did in the following manner.

“ My father, you may recollect, baron, retired from court to his castle in Hampshire several years since, on the decease of his lady, my mother, whose loss he never ceased to deplore.—Thither he carried me, and his nephew Hildebrand, (the only remaining son of an elder brother) to whom he entrusted the chief management of his extensive property, being himself unequal to the transaction of business, from the violence of his grief.—I, at that time, was scarcely ten years old, my brother Raymond, (the elder by eight or nine years) had, a
short

short time before our removal, been sent for to the continent, by Guy earl of Flanders (a prince distantly allied to my deceased mother) who had engaged to take charge of his future fortunes.

“As my father indulged very much in solitary sorrow, it necessarily happened that Hildebrand and myself were frequently together.—I had, however, early taken a dislike to him, and, young as I was, had sagacity to perceive his character displayed a contemptible combination of villany and hypocrisy, which filled me with disgust and contempt; nor could all his endeavours to conciliate my esteem, ever inspire me with a sentiment in his favor.

“As I grew up his attentions to me redoubled, and, not suspecting that he was actuated by interested motives, I thought common gratitude demanded a return of civility at least on my part.—I therefore relaxed, in some measure, the reserve and distance I had hitherto observed towards him, and behaved with more openness and freedom than usual.—It was not long, however, before I had reason to regret this alteration in my conduct.—What I intended as mere expressions of friendly politeness, Hildebrand misconstrued into tokens of regard; and actually began to fancy I was deeply enamoured of him.—This mistaken conviction of his soon produced

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duced a confidence in his manner that disgusted me extremely.—But my indignation was raised to the highest pitch, by his at length declaring in the most unequivocal terms, that he had long perceived the partiality with which I had honored him; that he felt a reciprocal attachment; was ready to blend his fortune with mine, whenever I would permit him to possess my hand.

“His effrontry and conceit filled me with astonishment, and prevented my replying for some moments.—Indeed, notwithstanding the knowledge I had of his character, it had never once occurred to me, that he could ever entertain the absurd idea
of

of a matrimonial alliance taking place between us.—I had just attained my sixteenth year; he was nearly forty.—Our consanguinity too precluded all possibility of marriage; and as he depended entirely on the bounty of my father, he had not the means of procuring a separate establishment.

“As soon as I recovered my surprise, “cousin,” said I, “your injurious notions with regard to myself, and your ingratitude towards sir Raymond, render you at once both contemptible and hateful to me.—You have abused my frankness, and his generosity.—It is time, however, he should be informed that he has
H 2 nourished

nourished a viper in his bosom, who repays the kindness by an attempt to wound him in the tenderest part." I waited not for any reply from Hildebrand, who, I observed, was very much agitated by what I had said, but instantly went to my father's apartment, determined to inform him of all that had passed.

"SIR Raymond listened to my account with very great displeasure and astonishment, and immediately ordered his nephew to attend him. They continued shut up together for some time; at length a domestic came to acquaint me, my presence was desired in the hall.—I went thither
and

and found both my cousin and father; the one with a countenance of much humiliation; the other apparently less disturbed than when I left him.

“I HAVE sent for you my child,” said sir Raymond, “that you may receive the apologies of Hildebrand for the insulting proposals he had the audacity to make to you.—His injury to myself I have forgiven, in consideration of the affection I entertained for his father, and his solemn promise of never repeating it again.—Whether, however, you can pardon his insolence, must entirely be left to yourself, the person principally concerned.—If you feel sa-

tisfied with his assurances of future respect and propriety of conduct, I shall again consider him as a member of our family; if not, it will be necessary for him to depart immediately from Netley castle."

"THO' I should gladly have heard Hildebrand's dismissal pronounced by my father, for he had become now doubly obnoxious to me, yet when I found his fate depended on myself, my heart sunk at the idea of a relation and fellow-creature being doomed to poverty and perhaps wretchedness by the sentence of my own mouth.—I therefore replied without hesitation, that as I doubted not the sincerity of my cousin's promises;

promises; I was willing also to forget what had passed, and to receive him on the same terms of friendship as before.—Hildebrand returned me the most servile thanks for my lenity and condescension; and mingled them with many hypocritical tears, which, tho' they served to deceive my father into an opinion of his sorrow for the offence he had been guilty of, were to me only confirming proofs of his base, mean, and degenerate soul.

“THE behaviour of my cousin, from this period, was entirely changed; to me he conducted himself, with the most respectful attention; to my father with the most assiduous regard.—My mind I confess,
often

often misgave me; I distrusted his sincerity, and feared this specious outside, only covered some evil and interested designs.—Little, however, did I dream such enormous wickedness lay concealed beneath it.—Sir Raymond, on the other hand, greatly pleased with what appeared in Hildebrand to be the result of a proper reflection on his folly, increased his confidence in him, and, being himself averse to action from infirmity and habitual sorrow, committed to him the unlimited direction of his affairs.—But oh! how fatally did he abuse his trust!

“In a short time, under pretence of having discovered a combination
amongst

amongst the domestics to defraud their master, Hildebrand, by one stroke of power, gave them a general dismissal.—My own confidential maid was amongst this devoted number, and Gilbert Nowil the faithful steward of the family.—Shocked and alarmed at this step, I ventured to remonstrate with my cousin on the subject; but could not avert his purpose.—He told me the proofs of their guilt were incontestible, that sir Raymond was convinced of it, and had ordered them to be dismissed his service.

“It was not without tears that I parted with trusty Frances, and the venerable Gilbert.—The faithful creatures

creatures were equally affected at our separation; my maid hung round me in an agony of grief; and the steward respectfully pressing my hand, gave me his blessing, and added, prophetically; "lady, take heed to yourself; dangers surround you;—beware of sir Raymond's nephew—and God grant that my young lord may speedily return to England to prevent those evils to you and your father, which my mind tells me are approaching." Saying this, he left me, the tears chasing each other down his furrowed cheeks.

"THE places of these domestics were immediately supplied by Hildebrand, who introduced a train of
ill-

ill-looking ruffians in their room.—

If their countenances shocked me, I was still more disturbed, when I observed from their manners, that they were void of all humanity and good breeding. It was to my cousin alone they seemed to pay any respect; nor did it escape me that they appeared to have been very well acquainted with him before they became the domestics of Netley castle. Without knowing exactly what to fear, I began to be filled with alarm; and gloomy forebodings of impending evils agitated my soul.— My father, a prey to grief that seemed rather to encrease than diminish, shut himself up as much as possible from human converse; so that

that I had no opportunity of disclosing any observations and alarms to him. A long time also had elapsed without any tidings from my brother.—I doubted not that he had fallen in battle, an apprehension which Hildebrand took great pains to strengthen. Thus I found myself without a friend or protector as it were, and surrounded by people, whom I could not cease to look upon with detestation and dismay.

“WHILST I remained in this unpleasant predicament, Hildebrand pretended to have discovered very improper practices amongst the inhabitants of Netley Abbey; a monastery you know my lord, under the

the protection of my father. Oswald the abbot, he said, had suffered many dilapidations in the buildings, and numberless relaxations amongst the monks; he therefore desired that sir Raymond would authorise him, to dismiss them, and fill the abbey with less exceptionable tenants. His story was implicitly believed, and the necessary power delegated to him; by an exertion of which he immediately removed Oswald and his inoffensive society from Netley, and brought thither the present infamous abbot, father Peter, and twelve monks of a similar character. At the same time he employed a number of workmen within the walls of the building, to make as he asserted, the necessary

I

cessary

cessary reparations; though, in fact, they were busied in preparing those subterraneous abodes, which were destined to be the scene of torture to my wretched parent and myself.

“IN proportion as Hildebrand’s influence with sir Raymond increased, his distance and respect towards myself diminished; and he would, at times, throw out hints on the subject which had before given me such great offence. Tho’ I now felt myself more in the power of the wretch than I was when he had insulted me with his former proposals, yet I could not brook a repetition of them.—I therefore gave him to understand, that should he dare to resume

sume the topic any more, I would instantly inform my father of his breach of promise, and thus effectually prevent his further persecutions.—Indeed, I had secretly determined to adopt the plan which I threatened, and only waited for a proper opportunity of doing it.—Heaven, however, was pleased to ordain, doubtless for the wisest reasons, that my intentions should be frustrated in the following manner.

“I HAD retired early to my chamber one evening, and was musing in silence and solitude on the unpleasantness, nay danger of my situation.—Tired at length with disagreeable reflections, I took up my
I 2 lute,

lute, in order to while away the tedious hours, as I felt no inclination to close my eyes in sleep. I had played for some time, when the sound of a bustle or tumult, in a distant part of the castle, caught my attention.—I distinctly heard a cry of distress, uttered (as it appeared to me) by my father.—Opening the door, I listened attentively; but nothing now was to be heard, save an indistinct murmur of voices that gradually died away.—I traversed the passage, and called loudly to the servants; no one however, answered my summons.

“As I returned to my chamber, my eye involuntarily fixed itself on
a large

a large portrait of fir Raymond, which hung opposite to the door.—The countenance methought was altered; the florid appearance of health it had heretofore worn, was changed to an 'emaciated and melancholy visage.—Trembling with apprehension I approached it; the eye appeared to be suffused with tears, and a deep sigh seemed to issue from the canvas.—Unusual terror seized me; I ran towards the door, and endeavoured to open it—but all my efforts were vain; it was fastened without.

“DISTRACTED with the dread of I knew not what, I shrieked aloud, and fell upon the floor.—After a few moments the door was opened,

and two men entered, whose faces were covered by vizors.—“Rise lady,” said the foremost of them, “it is necessary you should go with us.”—Saying this he seized me rudely, and threw over my head a long veil, in which he endeavoured to muffle me up.—I struggled violently, and made the castle echo with my screams.—“Save me O! my father,” cried I, “preserve your child from violation and murder.” “Do not trouble yourself about the old gentleman,” returned the insulting wretch, with an ironical sneer, “he is already taken care of; and by this time is effectually out of hearing.”

“THE

"THE horrible image of a butchered parent flashed instantly upon my fancy—nature was unequal to the shock.—The shades of death seemed to encompass me, and I sunk into a state of insensibility.

CHAP.

CHAP. XIV.

“A CONSIDERABLE time must have elapsed e’er my recollection returned, since, on recovering, I found myself in a subterraneous cell, to which I had been removed during the interval of stupifaction. A man habited like an ecclesiastic, was standing before me, holding a goblet of water, with which he had been endeavouring to revive me.

“FOR some moments, a confused idea of the events that had occurred, and the novelty of the scene around, left me in doubt whether my fancy were
not

not under the influence of some ill-omened dream; the voice of the monk, however, soon brought me to a sense of my real situation.——

“Lady,” said he, “I rejoice that you have recovered the effects of your unreasonable fears.——Be not alarmed; happy in the regard and protection of my lord Hildebrand, you will soon be reconciled to the seclusion of your abode, nor wish to leave the quiet of Netley Abbey.”—Saying this he quitted the apartment, locked the door, and departed.

“THE words of horror which he uttered, even now seem to vibrate on my ear; what then must have been my sensations at the time when they were spoken! The treacher-

ous villany of my cousin, was displayed; his mysterious conduct unriddled; and his diabolical intentions but too clearly manifested.—I doubted not that my father had already been sacrificed and I found myself compleatly in his power.—The thought was maddening.—In the first wild moments of despair, I rushed towards the door, and ineffectually strove to burst the lock.—I made the caverns echo with my cries, yet no one came to my assistance.

“THE violence of passion destroys its duration; my strength soon failed; and I sunk exhausted into a chair. It was now that I cast my thoughts
towards

towards heaven, and sought comfort at the hands of that being who alone can afford it in the hour of distress.—My mind received confidence, assurance, and strength from this appeal to the father of his creatures.—The gloom of the cavern gradually died away; and a gleam of hope, an emanation from the fountain of mercy, shot through my soul.

“AT this moment, the sound of footsteps caught my ear; the lock of the door flew back; and Hildebrand entered the room.—I was now however prepared for the detestable vision; and the holy support of religion enabled me to preserve my
calmness

calmness and composure.—“Cousin,” said he, “your astonishment, and alarm must have been excited, by the abrupt and forcible manner in which you were removed from Netley castle to this place. Believe me, however, nothing would have tempted Hildebrand to adopt so harsh a conduct had he not been convinced it was the only method of securing to himself the idol of his bosom.

“YES, fair maid, I have long loved you to distraction, and lived under the tortures of dissembling a passion which absorbed my whole soul.— You remember full well Agnes, how I disclosed the emotions of my bosom to you; and that I was rewarded for
my

my affectionate attachment by the scorn of yourself, and the anger of your father.—The haughty rebukes of sir Raymond, demanded from my injured feelings immediate vengeance, and nothing secured the safety of your indignant parent, but the hope of making him one day the means of my possessing his daughter.—That period is now arrived; both him and you are within the walls of Netley Abbey, and entirely at the disposal of myself.—The security and happiness of both rest with you.—If Agnes will listen to the vows of Hildebrand, all shall yet be well; but should she despise his regard, let the fatal consequences of her unmerited scorn be placed to

her own account.—Three days, lady, will I absent myself from the monastery, that you may consider maturely what I have said, and at the end of that period, I shall return to receive your determination. In the interim, I trust you will reconcile yourself to these apartments, which are stored with every means of comfort and convenience. The adjoining room contains a couch for your repose and the lute with which you have so often soothed my silent sorrows; and father Peter has strict orders to provide every necessary that you may wish to be accommodated with.”

“HILDEBRAND waited not for my
reply,

reply, but instantly left the room, taking care to secure the door when he retired.

“You may imagine my lord, the scene I had just encountered, was not calculated to raise my spirits; in truth it threw me into an agitation that effectually prevented any repose during the remainder of the night.—I employed therefore these sleepless hours, in considering what my cousin had said, and determining how I should receive him at the expiration of the three days.—Sometimes I resolved to dissemble with him, and by pretending a regard which I did not feel, endeavour by these means to gain at

least a little time. But I dropped this idea on recollecting the subtlety of Hildebrand, who was too deeply skilled in the arts of dissembling himself, to be imposed upon by the like practises in another.—Besides, my soul revolted at the thought of dissimulation; and falsehood, in every shape I had been taught from my earliest youth to detest. For myself, indeed, I had now ceased to be greatly alarmed, because, I hoped, that my hardest trial would be a confinement for life; but the thought of my dear parent, whose situation and fate I was ignorant of, filled me with pain and apprehension.—I was, however, without the means of satisfying my curiosity or
doing

doing away my fears on this subject; earnest petitions to heaven were all I could offer for his protection, and my own consolation.

“DURING these three days of Hildebrand’s absence, I repeatedly endeavoured to gain some information respecting sir Raymond, from father Peter, my only attendant; but he preserved an obstinate silence on this topic, and was only eloquent in the praises of my cousin, which he perpetually founded in my ears.

“THE fourth day at length arrived, and in the evening, Hildebrand entered my apartment. He appeared to be somewhat gayer than usual,

(which I soon perceived proceeded from intoxication,) and approaching me with a libertine and confident air, he seized my hand. "Well my fair cousin," cried he, "shall Hildebrand be happy? Will Agnes, despising the absurd prejudices of that fancied good which musty grey-beards have denominated virtue, consent to bless the arms of her faithful and adoring slave?—Speak delicious angel; or let me interpret the beautiful suffusion that glows upon your cheek, as the silent assent of bashful modesty.

"ALL the spirit of my father animated my bosom at this insufferable insult.—I forgot that I was unprotected

protected and alone, but starting up, and spurning Hildebrand from me, (for he had fallen on one knee at my feet,) I exclaimed; "Perfidious monster, avaunt! and know to thy confusion, that my soul both loaths and despises thee.—Dost thou think that Agnes Warren can feel one sentiment of regard for a wretch, base, remorseless, and unnatural like thyself? No, sooner would I perish, than give thee reason for a moment to entertain a thought so derogatory to my dignity and virtue !

"SURPRISE prevented Hildebrand's immediate reply ; his brow, however, contracted into a frown, and his eyes gleamed with fury.—It is
enough

enough, said he, at length in the voice of a dæmon, "thy words have fixed my wavering resolution.—But my vengeance shall be compleat.—Proud, insulting girl, both sir Raymond and yourself shall fully expiate the affronts cast on Hildebrand. That foolish affection which I once entertained for thee I from henceforth discard; but revenge will find thee a pleasing object to fate itself upon." With this dreadful threat he departed; leaving me to reflect on words that but too well disclosed the plans of horror with which his imagination teemed.

"UPWARDS of a fortnight elapsed, without another visit from my cousin;

fin; I gradually resumed my tranquillity, and began to flatter myself he might have reflected on the injustice of his conduct, or at least have laid aside all his sanguinary purposes.—Vain supposition! Oh! that I had never lived to be undeceived!

“ONE evening, father Peter, as usual, had brought me some refreshment.—When he retired, I observed the door of the apartment did not return its usual terrifying sound on being shut. As soon, therefore, as he was compleatly out of hearing, I approached it, and, on examination, found that it remained open.—I looked into the passage; listened attentively;

attentively; and hearing no noise, took the taper, and resolved to attempt regaining my liberty.

"I TURNED into a narrow passage which presented itself on my left hand.—It was long and dark.—My heart palpitated, as I entered it, and a certain fearful foreboding of evil, almost deterred me from proceeding. Leaning, however, against the wall for a few moments, and recommending myself to the protection of the Almighty, my resolution returned.—I now observed a door grated with iron; as I approached it, a deep and hollow groan reached my ear.—Again I hesitated; but fate impelled me forward.—A few inarticulate

culate words uttered in a feeble tone, issued from the cell.—My heart in a moment vibrated to the sound, and acknowledged the well known accents of my father's voice.—I sprang to the grating; but merciful god! what language can describe the accumulated horrors that seized my soul, when I beheld by the reflection of the taper, my much loved parent, stretched on the damp pavement of a noisome dungeon, pale, emaciated, and expiring!—The shriek of distraction which I uttered on beholding this terrible vision, rekindled in him for a moment the dying embers of departing existence, and called back his fleeting senses. He raised his dim eye to the
the

the grating; "Oh! cried he," in heart-piercing accents, "will ye not in pity spare me one small morsel of bread to quell the pain of hunger; one drop of water to quench this raging thirst?—Cruel Hildebrand, let mercy find its way, for once, into thy bosom; plunge thy dagger to my heart, and save me from the agonies of lingering torment."

"THE torture of my soul on hearing these words, prevented an immediate reply; the taper in the mean time threw a gleam of light on my face, and sir Raymoud for a moment, knew his child.—"Agnes! my darling, my beloved," exclaimed he, "art thou then still in being?—"

Hast

Haſt thou eſcaped the bloody fangs of thy unnatural couſin?—Gracious father of the wretched, I thank thee for this unexpected bleſſing! this ſweetner of my bitter cup!—But alas! what avails the mournful meeting?—The ſhades of death encompass me, and a few moments muſt number thy parent with the departed.—Seven days have now elapſed ſince my parched mouth has known the taſte of aliment or drink.—Hildebrand, the ſerpent which I nourished in my boſom, with more than ſavage cruelty, has thus revenged the rebukes he received on thy account, and which he never could forget.—Oh! my darling, would I could breath my laſt expiring ſign upon thy bo-

som—but these poor feeble limbs refuse their office.—Farewel then my child, farewel forever!—may the Almighty guardian of innocence preserve thee from the fury of thy cousin, and lead thee to safety and to peace. And if it permit thee ever to behold my gallant Raymond again, give him the parting blessing of his murdered father.”

“ I HAVE a confused recollection of the deep and lengthened groan that put a period to my parent’s pangs, but my senses could not long support the tumult of my soul.—My heart was bursting; my brain was fired.—Distraction at length produced a temporary oblivion of the horrors of my situation.

"I KNOW not how long I continued in a state of phrenzy; but I apprehend many weeks must have elapsed before I recovered my reason perfectly.—I then found that I had struggled through a dreadful delirious fever, which youth alone, and a good constitution enabled me to overcome.—This disorder left me reduced and emaciated, but at the same time composed and resigned. It had blunted the poignancy of affliction; and tho' it had not removed my woes, it enabled me to bear them with pious fortitude.

"IN the mean time I continued to be supplied with every necessary by father Peter, whose attentions were

constant and regular. He observed, however, an obstinate silence with regard to the horrible scene which had occasioned my illness; and I could scarcely get him to exchange a word with me on any subject. I was, notwithstanding, satisfied with this gloomy taciturnity, so long as the hateful Hildebrand forebore to torture me with his presence. It was indeed, a matter of surprise to me that I had not seen him since my indisposition; tho' I afterwards learned his absence was occasioned by a visit which he made at that time to the young king, with whom he had been formerly very intimate. But my quiet was of no long duration; further and greater trials were preparing for me.

“ONE

"ONE morning the abbot came in at his usual hour, with provision for the day; "lady," said he, "sir Hildebrand Warren has ordered me to notify to you, that he this evening intends to visit the mistress of his affections." My soul was chilled at the information, and the approach of night filled me with unutterable horror. I continued in dreadful expectation till nearly twelve o'clock when the fall of the trap-door, which was closed with great violence, announced the coming of the murderer of my father.—I heard his hateful step along the echoing passage; a moment after the door of my pri-

son flew open, and Hildebrand entered.

“A CONFLICT of contending passions kept me silent, and I could only look horror and detestation. The monster, however, approached me confidently, his eyes gleaming with determined villany. Seizing my hand with a force which I could not resist, he exclaimed, “Behold me not Agnes, thus indignantly; nor oblige me to adopt those measures which I would willingly avoid.—I am come hither once more to offer thee the hand of sir Hildebrand Warren. If thou art wise, and dost listen to my vows, I will strait conduct thee to liberty and splendor; Netley castle shall again receive

receive thee, and of that and its master thou shalt have sole command."

"INHUMAN villain! returned I, murderer of my parent, and base usurper of my brother's rights, how darest thou to approach the daughter of the good sir Raymond, whose only fault was taking such a viper as thee to his bosom?—No—rather would I pass the gates of death, than ever think of thee but with hate, contempt, and horror."

"SIMPLE girl," cried Hildebrand with the countenance of a fiend, "how I smile at thy indignation, which only serves to lighten up thy beauties,

beauties, and make thee more attractive in my eye.—I would willingly have made thee partner of my fortunes ; but since thou hast thought fit to scorn my favor, know that Hildebrand will possess by force, what he has petitioned for in vain.” Saying this, he caught me in his arms. Unutterable anguish pierced my bosom ; I shrieked aloud, but there was none to hear me ; I struggled to free myself from his grasp, but all my struggles were in vain. Breathless and exhausted I raised my streaming eyes to heaven.—“Spirit of my father,” cried I, “preserve thy child from pollution.”—Nor did providence disregard my petition. A sudden blast of wind that shook the building

building, rushed along the passage; and a hollow groan echoed through the vaults. The countenance of Hildebrand became pale with terror; he started and retreated from me several steps.

“I WAS myself astonished at the sounds; but the idea of availing myself of his amazement, was the first which arose in my mind.—“Wretched man,” said I, “mark how the hand of heaven has interposed to protect my injured innocence.—Cease then to tempt its lingering vengeance; but hasten from these subterranean abodes, which thou hast already stained with murder, lest they should also become the scene of thy deserved

deserved and terrible punishment." For a moment he continued silent, but at length fiercely replied—"No, insolent girl, think not I will be disappointed of my revenge.—Away all idle fears, all superstitious terrors; though hell itself should gape before me, I still would execute my meditated purpose."

"MAD with rage he again approached me, and despair again shook my feeble frame.—But Omnipotence was my succour. The blast once more roared with tenfold violence; the caverns trembled to their foundations; the massive door of the cell was burst open; and the awful shade of my father, clad in compleat armour, appeared.

"THE

“THE vision was but momentary, for ere I could address the well-known form, it had vanished into air—but the benevolent purposes of heaven were fully answered.—Horror and distraction overspread the livid countenance of my cousin; he uttered some incoherent words, and sunk upon the ground.

“THE uncommon noises which had been heard, alarmed, in the mean time, the slumbering ecclesiastics, and father Peter with two or three of the brethren, rushed into my apartment.—Their astonishment may be easily imagined, when they beheld the situation of Hildebrand, who appeared entirely void of sense or motion.—

Consulting

Consulting together a moment, however, on the proper steps to be taken for his recovery, they agreed it would be better to remove him into the air, and accordingly departed from the room, and left me to my meditations; the abbot having first taken care to secure the door.

“ A VARIETY of emotions agitated my soul.—I bent my grateful knee to that beneficent Being, who by an unexpected exertion of kindness, had thus rescued me from the horrors of despair.—My bosom received confidence and comfort in the idea of my being under the protection of the father of mercy; and a deep desire to be accounted worthy of this favor settled in my heart.

“THUS supported by the consolations of religion, my fears and tumults subsided; and tho’ I could not but wish for deliverance from the gloomy regions to which I was confined, yet I did not suffer myself to be unhappy because no immediate prospect of relief appeared.—What I chiefly dreaded was the presence of my detestable cousin; but from this trial I was unaccountably preserved, since weeks and months elapsed without his visiting my prison.—For some time I imagined he had never recovered from the state of insensibility into which the supernatural vision had thrown him; but father Peter did not suffer me to continue long in this error,

since he assured me sir Hildebrand was still alive, and had received a confirmation from the crown of all my father's honors and demesnes, in consequence of certain intelligence having been received of my brother's assassination on the continent.

“THIS news, as may be supposed, sunk deeply into my heart; I now saw myself deprived of every earthly stay; heaven was my only hope, thither alone could I look for comfort and for peace.—Still however, the days rolled on, and sir Hildebrand did not appear; nor indeed has he ever distressed me with his presence, since the night I have just described; a circumstance which I
can

can only account for on the supposition, that his guilty conscience was too much terrified to allow him to visit those abodes again, which had been the scene of his cruelties, and where his terrors had been so much excited.

“BUT I fear, my lord, my story becomes tedious; allow me then to bring it to a conclusion. A few evenings since, finding myself rather indisposed, I retired to my couch for repose. When I awoke, and returned into the outer chamber, I perceived the door was, by accident, left open.—I proceeded immediately into the narrow passage, and ascended a flight of steps that

M 2

caught

caught my eye.—These I had passed, and had penetrated to the cloisters, when a monk discovered me by the reflection of the moon on my white dress.—He alarmed the convent, and two of the brethren immediately seized, and rudely forced me again down the stairs. Twice, however, I screamed with all my strength, in the hope that these cries of distress might excite the attention and curiosity of some way-faring traveller. Nor was my hope unfounded; your son my lord, (as he informed me) heard the shrieks, which first raised his suspicion, and led to the inquiry, that has terminated in his delivering the unfortunate Agnes Warren from Netley Abbey.

"SUCH baron is the melancholy story of a friendless orphan, deprived in early youth, of all that she held dear; robbed by perfidious cruelty of those who should have been her guides and guardians thro' life.— But thanks be to heaven, which in its kindness has thus unexpectedly thrown me under the protection of the baron de Villars, whose honor and generosity are sufficient securities to me, that he will supply the place of father and of brother."

CHAP. XV.

DE Villars and his children were deeply affected at the melancholy tale of Agnes Warren.—The baron heard with horror and astonishment the inhuman perfidy of Hildebrand towards his old and valued friend; Eleanor sympathised with the fair sufferer in each situation of her alarm and distress; whilst Edward's bosom experienced a rapid succession of emotions according to the various circumstances of the story.

THE impressions which the daughter of sir Raymond had before made
on

on him, were confirmed and exalted.—His heart whispered to him he could only hope for happiness from her; but doubts and anxieties perplexed him.

THE diffidence that generally accompanies intellectual worth, prevented him from entertaining the idea of his having already made any particular progress in her favor; and even could he have persuaded himself that he possessed her good opinion, yet the broken fortunes of his family would have crushed every hope of binding her to him by the ties of marriage.

“WHAT,” said he to himself,
“shall

"shall a ruined, and forlorn fugitive from his country, without friends without possessions, lift his thoughts to Agnes Warren, and basely endeavour to involve in ruin and distress such excellence as her's?—No, perish the thought; Edward de Vilars shall never be dishonorable.—Rather let all his selfish hopes be extinguished forever, than the bosom of unsuspecting innocence be pierced with one pang on his account."

WHILE these reflections were passing in the mind of Edward, his father and sister had mingled their tears with these of Agnes, and soothed her sorrows by participating them. "But come," said the baron, let us
not

not sink into despondency, and loose the precious moments in unavailing woe, but look to brighter scenes, and happier days.—Heaven, Agnes, will still reward your piety and sufferings; and the unnatural disturber of your peace shall shortly meet the just reward of his complicated villany.—In the mean time, behold in me your father and your friend; such protection as my shattered state affords, shall never be refused to the daughter of sir Raymond Warren.”

DE Villars had scarcely finished his speech, when Robert came into room to acquaint his lord, that the knight, who had rescued the lady Eleanor,

Eleanor, was at the gate of the castle, and desired admittance. "Run quickly," said the baron, "and open our doors to the deliverer of my child. —Heaven! I thank thee, that thou hast permitted me e're I quit my country, to behold him once again, to whom I owe my poor remains of earthly happiness."

THE faithful domestic flew to obey his lord, and shortly returned, followed by the knight, who wore the same black armour in which de Villars had before seen him.

A SUDDEN blush overspread the countenance of Eleanor on his entrance; an universal agitation shook her

her frame, and it was with difficulty she could support herself. Fortunately, however, her confusion was not noticed, for a more surprising scene immediately occupied the attention of de Villars and his son.

THE knight had advanced towards the former in order to pay his respects, when his eye by accident fixed itself on the countenance of Agnes Warren, whose face was displayed by the veil being thrown back. For a moment he gazed on her with the utmost earnestness; then suddenly unclasping his helmet, he sprang forwards, and embracing her, exclaimed, "Great God! 'tis she, 'tis she herself, 'tis Agnes my beloved!"

As-

ASTONISHMENT overwhelmed the daughter of sir Raymond; but it soon gave way to more pleasing emotions, on her recollecting in the features of the young knight, the countenance of her brother. Excessive transport rendered her incapable of expressing the workings of her soul; she fell upon his neck, and wept aloud.

NOR could the spectators behold the interesting scene unmoved.—A meeting thus unexpected, between those bound to each other by the strongest ties of fraternal affection, when they had mutually relinquished the idea of each other being in existence; produced a surprise so
new,

new, a delight so tumultuous in the principal parties, as powerfully called forth the feelings of de Villars and his children. Incoherent expressions of joy and congratulation, formed the only language that passed for a few minutes.

THE knight, however, recovering himself, turned to de Villars saying, "Excuse, my lord, the indulgence of those transports which were excited by a rencounter thus happy and unhoped for.—Ten years have now elapsed since the separation of Agnes and myself.—A separation, alas! fatal to the life of my father, and the peace of his unfortunate offspring! —But let me forget the wretchedness

of the past, in gratitude for the present boon—that heaven has been pleased to bestow, the recovery of my sister, the friend of my youth, in the moment when despair bade me cease to look for her on this side the grave.”

“KNIGHT” returned the baron, “attempt not to apologise for emotions which do honor to our nature; de Villars, believe me, sympathises in your extacy from his very soul.—The ties with which gratitude had before bound him to you, are now still closer drawn, since he discovers in the deliverer of his daughter the gallant son of sir Raymond Warren.—But come, my children,

children, welcome to our castle, the representative of my ancient friend; whose countenance impresses on my recollection those manly graces, that vigorous beauty, which adorned his father in the first period of our acquaintance."

EDWARD instantly rushed forward, and snatching the hand of the knight with fervor to his bosom, expressed, in animated terms, the happiness he experienced at being able to thank him for the infinite obligations he had conferred on his family, and to offer him at the same time his warm and undivided friendship.—Eleanor also approached, her countenance deeply suffused with blushes.—She

attempted to congratulate him on the unexpected interview with his sister, and to bid him welcome to the baron's residence; but her words were unconnected, and her manner embarrassed.

DE Villars saw the distress under which she laboured, and instantly divined the cause; but willing to relieve it, he requested Raymond to favor them with a detail of his adventures.—“Doubtless,” said he, “you must have witnessed many interesting scenes, since your departure from your native country.—Inform us then, of the events that have occurred; and the reasons which induced you thus to conceal your real character,

character, and to assume this mysterious appearance, since your return to England."

THE knight bowed an assent to de Villars's request, and began as follows.

"IT is needless for me to enter into the history of the domestic concerns of our family, previous to my departure for the continent, because little interesting to others occurred in them.—No accident or disaster broke in upon our peace, or varied the uniform and happy routine of our mode of living, till the decease of my beloved mother.—From that moment felicity forsook our dwelling;

the disconsolate sir Raymond sunk into the deepest melancholy, and determined to abstract himself immediately, in his country residence, from all society.

"I PROBABLY should have accompanied him to his retreat in Hampshire, had not Guy, count of Flanders (a relation of my mother) just at this period, given me an invitation to his court.—He had formed an alliance with the late king, and undertaken to invade the territories of Philip the fair of France, with whom Edward was then at war.

"THE call of glory to the youthful mind, is irresistible; I panted for
military

military fame, and thought this a favorable opportunity of acquiring unfading laurels in the field of battle. Without hesitation therefore I accepted the offer, and in an evil hour, deserted my parent and my sister.— Sacred shade of my fire, forgive this breach of filial duty, and let the frequent tears of vain regret which I have shed, propitiate thy pardon!

“THE tumults of war employed my mind so effectually, for six or seven years, that altho’ I rarely received any tidings from my native land, I was not anxious on this account.— A little relaxation however, in military toil, allowed me to turn my thoughts towards those connections,
who

who still possessed my warm, my undivided regard.—A twelvemonth elapsed without hearing from them. A special messenger whom I dispatched from the army, which was then in Brabant, did not return, I became seriously uneasy about them, and solicited permission to visit England myself, and satisfy my anxieties.

“THE count of Flanders had granted my request, and I was prepared to set out, when a sudden misunderstanding took place between him and John duke of Brabant, and instantly burst into mutual hostilities. The command I held in Guy’s army, was an high and important one, from which I could not absent myself without

without danger to the service.—Private considerations therefore were obliged to give way to public duties. I relinquished the idea of leaving the continent as yet, and bent my whole attention to the business of the war.

“ONE evening after a successful rencounter with the enemy, I retired to my tent, oppressed with fatigue, to enjoy an hour’s repose.—I slept undisturbed till midnight, when I awoke.—The door of the tent was unclosed, and the full moon threw her placid reflection on my couch. Immediately in the front, a venerable wood reared its aspiring head; and by its “brown horrors” formed
a fine

a fine contrast to the rich radiance of the planet of the night.—All was hushed around; and not even a breeze disturbed the solemn quiet of the hour.

“I WAS struck with the awful beauty of the scene; and naturally fell into meditations of a serious nature.—Busy fancy began to present her fictions to my mind, my thoughts turned to England, and fears for the safety of those dear connections which I had left there arose.

“I REFLECTED with pain on the length of time that had elapsed, since any tidings of them had reached my knowledge.—The state of distress to
which

which my father had been reduced by the death of his lady, and the unprotected situation in which Agnes would be left in case of any accident happening to him, next occurred to my recollection.—Imagination conjured up a thousand distressing chimeras; I reproached myself for having thus long absented myself from those of whom I ought to have been the protector; and resolved to return to sir Raymond as soon as I could absent myself from the army without dishonor.

“WHILST these reflections passed in my mind, my eye was bent on the skirting of the wood, through which the beams of the moon dart-
ed

ed an intercepted radiance.—On a sudden the form of an armed warrior appeared, pacing slowly between the trees.—He soon however left the wood, and directed his steps towards me.—Surprised at the unusual sight, I started from my couch, and sprang to the door of my tent—the knight approached ; his helmet was open ; the moon played upon his face, and discovered to my astonished vision, a pale and sorrowful countenance in which I traced the features of my father.

“WONDER rivetted me to the spot whereon I stood ; and prevented me from either approaching or questioning the phantom ; which heaving a deep

deep sigh, exclaimed in mournful accents, "Raymond, beware of Hildebrand!" A spreading cedar tree, hid, at this moment, the appearance from my view, and I saw it no more.

"THE apprehensions which I had before entertained, were now confirmed; and the solemn monition pronounced by the shade of my father, afforded me a clue, by which I could discover the author of all the dreaded evils.—What they might be I was at a loss to conclude; but I could not doubt they were of an extraordinary nature, as it had pleased providence to prepare me for them, in a manner out of the common course of its operations.

“REFLECTIONS of this nature occupied my mind till morning; when I left my tent, fully resolved to take an early opportunity of quitting the army, and departing for England.

“A FEW days elapsed without any particular circumstance occurring; the enemy having been beaten in various skirmishes, did not shew themselves without their encampment, and left our forces to a temporary repose. During this interval of inaction, I gave myself up entirely to reflection on the singular scene I had witnessed; and indulged my melancholy, by frequenting the wood, from whence the spirit of my parent had appeared to proceed, flattering

tering myself that I might be indulged once more with the awful vision.

"I HAD repeated these solitary walks for several evenings, but usually returned to the encampment before midnight.—I remained, however, in the solemn shades, one night, later than usual, and the distant village clock beat the hour of twelve, before I thought of leaving them. I had scarcely turned to retrace my road, when I distinctly heard a whisper at a few paces from me.—I listened, but the sounds had ceased. The supernatural warning I had lately received, occurred to my recollection; I unsheathed my trusty
o 2 fword,

sword, and proceeded.—There was a small brake on my right hand, which I must necessarily pass, from whence, indeed, the whisper appeared to me to come.—Nor was I mistaken; for as soon as I had reached it, two people in military habits and armed with daggers, started up from behind it, and rushed upon me.

“I WAS, however, prepared for their reception, and in a moment laid the foremost of them dead at my feet.—The surviving villain, had in the mean time, grazed my left shoulder with his weapon; and was preparing a blow at my heart—but I prevented his intention by burying my sword in his side.

“HE fell to the ground; and I had lifted my arm to put him instantly to death; when he exclaimed, “Spare for a moment fir knight, a wretch who has already received his death at your hands.—A few minutes must close my existence; and I look with horror on the crime which I have been induced to attempt committing. But e’er I quit the world, I would willingly make all the amends in my power to injured innocence, by unfolding the reasons which actuated me to this bloody deed.”

“HILDEBRAND your kinsman, is the author of this villany. His cursed gold corrupted the honesty of
o 3 myself,

myself, and brother, who now lies dead before you; and engaged us to undertake your assassination.—

For this purpose, we came, a few days since to the army as volunteers; and ever since our arrival, have carefully watched an opportunity of executing our scheme.—To-night appeared a favourable one; but mark how Heaven has frustrated the sanguinary design.—I die however without regret, because I trust my untimely fall will atone, in some degree, for my atrocious guilt.—But think not youth, that this is the only evil you may expect from the hands of Hildebrand.—By him your father is murdered; your rights are usurped; and your sister—.” Death prevented him from

concluding

concluding the sentence; he fell back, and groaned out his miserable soul.

“HE had uttered, however, sufficient to fill me with horror and dismay. All my fears were now realized.—Part of his terrible detail, the death of sir Raymond, had been confirmed by the previous adventure which befel me, and the remainder, told in the moment of dissolution, I could not disbelieve.

“BUT the uncertainty in which he left me, respecting Agnes, was intolerable. Every possible situation of distress, arose to my affrighted imagination, and nearly deprived me of reason. I hurried to my tent, and
waited

waited impatiently for the morning, determined, whatever might be the consequence to hasten immediately to England. The dawn at length appeared; I changed my usual costly armour for the black suit which I at present wear; mounted my palfrey, and left the army. I used all the expedition in my power; passed into Normandy, then took shipping, and soon arrived on the coast of Suffex.

“IT now behoved me to act with the greatest caution, since I found by my enquiries, that it was universally believed throughout the country, sir Raymond Warren and his daughter had died several months before, of a contagious fever, and
Raymond

Raymond the son been carried off by assassination, on the continent.—Part of this infernal fabrication I could have immediately disproved, by declaring myself to be the son of the deceased knight; but this disclosure prudence forbid me to make, because I also understood that Hildebrand had received an ample confirmation of the young king, with whom he was a great favorite, of all the possessions of my late father; and had established himself in the demesne, by collecting around him a band of retainers more numerous than any baron in those parts.

“THESE circumstances therefore made me resolve to keep myself concealed

concealed for the present, and wait patiently for an opportunity of revenging the death of my father, vindicating my rights, and rescuing my sister from the power of Hildebrand, if, happily she yet survived his bloody machinations. That I might be the better able to make every proper observation, and to take advantage of each favorable circumstance as it arose, I resolved to approach as near to the castle of Netley as I could without danger of discovery, and accordingly proceeded by nocturnal journies to that neighbourhood.

“ I HAD already reached the woods which surround the mansion, and
saw

saw its stately turrets tower above the trees, when I was agreeably surprised by the appearance of our old domestic Gilbert Nowil, who crossed the path down which I rode. I called to him by name; the faithful creature knew my voice, and in an extacy of joy threw himself at my feet. "And is it possible," cried he, "that my aged eyes should again be blessed with a sight of my young lord, when every hope of his being yet alive had left me? But fly," continued he, after a short pause, "fly from this abode of death and horror.—The bloody Hildebrand possesses these demesnes, and should his numerous followers discover you, rest assured that all the violence of
power,

power, and arts of cunning would be exhausted to destroy you. Your faithful servant has a small cottage at three miles distance from hence; thither will I conduct you, my lord, and there may you continue quietly concealed, till it please heaven (which will not suffer villany long to triumph) to point out some method for the recovery of your usurped rights."

"I SUFFERED myself to be persuaded by Gilbert, and accompanied him to his residence, where I also found the old domestic of my sister, to whom he had afforded protection, ever since their dismissal from the service of my father. On our way
to

to the cottage, I learned each circumstance that had transpired since I departed from England, to the time of the sudden disappearance of sir Raymond and my sister. What had befallen them after that period he was unable to inform me, tho' he suspected from certain circumstances which he had both heard and observed, that Netley Abbey was in some manner concerned with their fate. From him also I learned the arrival of your family, baron, in the neighbourhood of my father's territories, and the partiality which my detestable kinsman had ventured to declare for your amiable daughter.

“GILBERT’s detail filled me with astonishment and rage; and I should immediately have ridden to the castle, and discovered myself to be the rightful owner of the demesne, had not my impetuosity been restrained by the prudent suggestions of my aged counsellor, who endeavoured to sooth my bosom with the hope of future opportunities more favorable to my purpose than the present one.

“I THEREFORE continued quiet in my retreat for a few days, until I was roused by the intelligence of sir Hildebrand Warren’s intended tournament held in honor of the baron de Villars daughter. No consideration
could

could now prevent my visiting the castle, and attending the entertainment. I could not endure the idea of the infernal destroyer of my family making my usurped possessions the theatre of his own glory; and the thought of so much beauty and worth as the lady Eleanor was reported to possess, being sacrificed to such a wretch, was equally intolerable. I therefore, on the morning appointed for the jousting, mounted my palfrey, and rode towards the castle, fully determined to execute my plans of vengeance, by putting sir Hildebrand to death during the tournament.

“ You baron were witness to the scene that passed. My intention
was

was frustrated, as I found afterwards; or I should not have quitted the list without fulfilling my purpose, had not I apprehended that our third meeting had been fatal to him—when however, I returned, and was assured that Hildebrand survived the encounter, my chagrin became extreme; and I resolved by some means or other, to try my own arm with him once more in single combat.

“FOR this purpose I caused his motions to be observed, and learned that he usually visited the abbey, unattended, every day about noon—Yesterday it was my intention to intercept him; when in my way towards the spot that I had pitched

pitched on as my place of ambush, I beheld your fair daughter my lord, in the situation of distress from which it was my happy lot to deliver her. After rendering her safe into your hands, I continued my route, and waited, without seeing any person, till night made it necessary for me to return to Gilbert's cottage.

"THIS morning, however, I again set out for the same place, and had been there some hours, when I was informed by a menial domestic of Hildebrand's, that his master had yesterday gone with a large party of his retainers into the New Forest, for the purpose of hunting, and intended to continue there several days.

For a short time therefore, I was obliged to lay aside my scheme; and on my return from the retreat took this opportunity of paying my respects at your lordship's castle; where however, I little expected to find that dear connection, whom my fears had long since numbered with the dead,

“FOR my father's fate I dread almost to ask, but melancholy, certainty is not so painful as suspense; unfold therefore Agnes the sad truth whatever it may be, and tell me by what blessed providence I find you thus in health and safety.”

“THE baron's family united in requesting that Agnes would again relate
late

late her story—Raymond listened to the recital with silent sorrow—the tear of affection rolled down his manly cheek, and sympathetic tenderness moistened the eye of every one present. His sister having concluded her story, the baron imparted to him the resolution he had formed of immediately quitting England, together with his reasons for so doing, and pressed his accompanying the party to the continent.

“RAYMOND returned his grateful thanks for the interest which de Villars thus kindly took in his concerns, and gladly availed himself of the proposition ; but,” said he, “ my lord, it will not be necessary

necessary to execute your design so immediately as you proposed. —Hildebrand has left his castle for some days ; and it is certain nothing can be attempted by him till he returns. Let us therefore remain two days longer e'er we depart, that every necessary arrangement may be made for the expedition ; and proper directions left with the faithful Gilbert, in case it should please providence to order events in such a manner as may enable us once more to return to England."

THE baron immediately acceded to the proposal of sir Raymond, (who now assumed his legal title) and with
the

the greater pleasure, as it allowed Agnes and his daughter to make more comfortable preparations than the shortness of the time would other-ways have allowed them.

CHAP.

CHAP. XVI.

THE interesting occurrences of the day had awakened all the sensibilities of the parties concerned in them, and the penetration of de Villars easily discovered that a reciprocal attachment had taken place between Edward and Agnes Warren, as well as between sir Raymond and his daughter.—It was with the sincerest pleasure he beheld this mutual partiality, the disinterested affection of generous and congenial souls, but as he still considered his family within the power of Hildebrand, he determined to drop no hint of his
being

being conscious of the situation of their hearts till such time as he had entirely escaped the reach of his machinations.—He therefore stimulated them to exert themselves in providing for their departure on the evening of the second day.

SIR Raymond and Edward in the interim, had entered into the firmest bonds of friendship, mutually unfolded their sentiments, and engaged to assist each other in their different suits; while Agnes and Eleanor, with equal candour had acted in the same confidential manner; and disclosed without reserve, the predilection which they felt for their respective deliverers.

THE

THE baron having obtained from sir Raymond the information of Gilbert's retreat, dispatched Robert to his cottage, that he might conduct both him and Frances to the castle; the latter of whom, Agnes Warren was desirous of taking into exile with her; the faithful creatures soon arrived, but language is unable to paint their unaffected joy, in once more beholding a mistress, whose kindness and generosity had ever deprived servitude of its pain, and engaged them to her by the strongest bonds of affection. Frances heard with the most unfeigned delight the arrangements which had been made, and declared that nothing should again separate her from her beloved mistress.

trefs.—Gilbert also promised to watch the motions of Hildebrand with the strictest vigilance; to unfold gradually through the country, his complicated villainies, as well as the means by which young Warren and his sister had been enabled to escape them; and to deliver into the hands of de Villars' friends the Earls of Hereford, Pembroke, and Lancaster, letters containing a full detail of all the occurrences which had happened.

EVERY thing was now prepared for the departure of the baron and his family. The second evening had arrived; the bark which should convey them to the continent floated in

the river; and the party only waited for the quiet and darkness of midnight that they might get on board their vessel without observation.—The clock at length struck eleven; the domestics were laden with provisions and necessaries for the expedition; and de Villars led Agnes Warren to the gate of the castle.

HE was on the point of opening it, when a violent knocking alarmed the party.—For a moment surprise kept them silent; the baron, however, soon exclaimed, “Robert unbar the gate; if it be a friend who knocks thus loudly, we need not be concerned, and should it be our foe, our number and the goodness of our cause

cause will enable us to defy his malice.”—On these words; Robert opened the gate, (the ladies having first retired) and discovered a man in the habit of a monk, whose look bespoke terror, dismay and astonishment.

As soon as he beheld de Villars, “hasten my lord,” exclaimed he, in interrupted accents, “to Netley Abbey, which teems with blood and horror.”—The baron desired the ecclesiastic to compose himself, and to be more explicit with regard to the what had occasioned his alarm.—“My lord,” replied he, “it is now vain to endeavour to keep that from your knowledge, which must shortly be fully unfolded. I

will therefore be candid, and hope that my confession may be received as the price of pardon.

“MANY months since, the daughter of sir Raymond Warren was committed by sir Hildebrand to the care of father Peter, and confined in a subterraneous apartment in our abbey, which had been prepared under the immediate inspection of sir Hildebrand, in the life time of his uncle.—Here she continued nearly two years; during which time, altho’ sir Hildebrand had only three or four interviews with her, yet he generally paid a visit to the monastery every day, to make enquiries relative to his prisoner, whom he had determined to confine for life.

"A FEW evenings past, a youth disguised as a minstrel, found means to introduce himself to our monastery.—He imposed upon the abbot, and gained his permission to remain there one night; during the course of which, he discovered the apartment of sir Raymond's daughter, and rescued her from her confinement.—On the morning when the circumstance was known, father Peter, half dead with consternation, caused immediate search and enquiry to be made for the fugitives; but without effect.—He dreaded to see sir Hildebrand, as he had given him the strictest charges for the safe custody of the lady; the case however was remediless, and he could

only unfold to him what had happened.

“THIS evening the knight returned from a hunting match in the New Forest and an hour since, reached the abbey, much intoxicated with wine, a practice to which he has of late been considerably addicted. His first inquiry was for Agnes Warren; whose flight he learnt with rage that bordered on phrenzy.—He loaded the abbot with every execration that passion suggested, and swore he would put him to death unless he immediately discovered the place of her retreat.—These invectives, and menaces roused father Peter’s indignation; he made a sharp
reply

reply.—Sir Hildebrand was enflamed to madness; and plucking a dagger from his side, he rushed upon the abbot, and plunged it in his bosom. The blow was mortal; but ere he fell, he seized the weapon from the hand of sir Hildebrand and inflicted a deep and fatal wound in his groin, which brought him also to the ground.

“FATHER Peter, my lord, immediately expired; but his antagonist, after a short time, recovered both his sense and reason. He soon saw that a few hours must terminate his existence, and a consciousness of the many crimes he had committed instantly arose to his disturbed mind.

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His penitence is, however, deep, and his wishes are to employ the remaining portion of life, in endeavouring to make atonement for his offences. For this purpose he dispatched messengers for several of his retainers and domestics, and ordered me to fly to the castle of baron de Villars, and request the immediate attendance, of you my lord, your son and daughter at the abbey."

THE detail of the monk filled his audience with astonishment and awe. The baron lifted his eye to heaven, and breathed an ejaculation of grateful wonder to that being, who thus unexpectedly illumines the darkness of despair; raises the drooping
spirits

spirits of suffering virtue; and humbles in the dust the towering schemes of daring profligacy.

“MONK” said the baron, “return to the abbey, and announce our immediate approach. We will follow thee with all speed.” As soon as he was departed, “children,” continued de Villars, “mark how the hand of heaven is at length manifested in our favor, at the moment when hope had ceased to cheer us.—Such is the reward of a pious resignation to its decrees.—Let not man then, impiously arraign the most high, if in the course of his moral government of his creatures, iniquity appears to triumph, and piety
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to be depressed; but let him learn from our adventures, that the time will come when patient suffering shall be recompensed with its reward, and insulting vice be deservedly punished."

THE party now proceeded to the abbey, which they soon reached.—All here was confusion and alarm; the monks, conscious of their iniquities, were trembling with apprehension, and several of sir Hildebrand's retainers stood in the cloisters, whose countenances expressed the despair they entertained of their patron's recovery.

AT length the baron and his son
entered

entered the refectory, the theatre of the bloody tragedy which had been acted; sir Raymond remaining with the ladies, in the cloisters without.— Here they beheld a scene dreadful beyond description. In one corner of the room lay the abbot, deprived of life, and weltering in his blood.— But his features had not lost the distortions with which rage and pain had stamped them. In another part appeared Hildebrand, stretched upon a couch in a state of horror next to madness.— Four attendants endeavoured to secure his hands, and to prevent him from tearing away the bandages that had been applied to his wound.— Lamentations for his enormities, mingled with shrieks, and execrations,

execrations, burst occasionally from him; while his blood-shot eyes that rolled with fearful rapidity, too well bespoke the despair which harrowed his soul.

EXHAUSTED at length with struggling and exertion, he grew more composed; and returning recollection enabled him to perceive and know de Villars and his son. The sight of them had nearly reduced him again to distraction. For a few minutes he was silent, but at length exclaimed, "Pardon, pardon de Villars, a wretch who is now going to expiate his enormous crimes—one who had secretly doomed your daughter to dishonor, and yourself and son
to

to assassination. But heaven has prevented this accumulation of infernal wickedness. Would that its lightnings had blasted me, ere I committed those other crimes which stain my polluted soul—the murder of my friend, my patron, my relation; and his gallant son.”

“HILDEBRAND,” returned the baron, “let not the evils you intended to inflict on me, which it has pleased heaven thus wonderfully to avert, grieve your departing spirit. I from my soul forgive thee all thy meditated injuries. For thy treatment of the good sir Raymond, which I have heard from the lips of Agnes who is now under my protection,

may heaven accept thy deep contrition; and give thee to be thankful that it spared one transgression to thy sinful soul, the death of his son, who has wonderfully escaped thy malice, and now attends thee that thou mayest in the presence of us all, make restitution to him of his usurped rights."

"AND does he live?" cried Hildebrand, "oh bring him hither, to bless my burning eyes, and hear my last weak sighs of penitence." Raymond immediately entered the apartment, having laid aside his shield and helmet. The strong resemblance, however, between the youth and his murdered father, instantly flashed upon
on

on Hildebrand; the dreadful vision occurred to his imagination, and threw him into a paroxysm of horror and despair. "Save me, save me," exclaimed he, starting from the couch into the arms of his attendants, "from him, whose look withers my soul. Hell itself with all its horrors is less terrible, than the blasting eye of that fearful spectre."

THE agitation of his mind became too violent for his exhausted frame to contend with. The blood gushed again from his wound. The cold dews of death overspread his face—and his agonised soul took her flight, in a groan of despair that filled the bye-standers with astonishment and awe.

As soon as the monks, and the attendants of Hildebrand were fully convinced of their patron's dissolution, they began to think of providing for their own safety. They had been privy to all his enormities, and dreaded the punishment they so justly deserved. Each therefore immediately endeavoured to fix the whole odium of them on the two principals, Hildebrand and the abbot; and officiously proffered his services to sir Raymond, whom the former had declared to be the right heir of Netley demesne.

THE youth rebuked them severely for their baseness and servility, assuring them that guilt should never find

find an asylum under his protection. His father's wrongs were not to be forgotten, and he resolved as soon as he was firmly settled in his rights, that public inquiry should be made into the circumstances of sir Raymond's death, and the severest punishment inflicted on those who were concerned in the foul deed.

As the morning had now dawned, sir Raymond, accompanied by de Villars and his son, proceeded to Netley castle in order to take possession of his parental estates. From thence a message was dispatched to all the barons and knights in the neighbourhood, begging their attendance. Before this numerous body, de Vil-

lars made a full detail of the various circumstances which had occurred, both with regard to sir Raymond's family and his own. His narrative was confirmed by the testimony of Gilbert, several of Hildebrand's own domestics, and the monk who had first carried the tidings to de Villars of the tragical scene at the abbey. The whole assembly expressed their astonishment at the story, and their hearty congratulations to sir Raymond on his escaping the malevolence of Hildebrand, and retrieving his property and honors; and united in swearing to support him in both, with their swords and fortunes. Messengers were also instantly sent off to court, with an account of what had

had passed, and to solicit a confirmation of the estates to the legal heir,

THIS extraordinary and unexpected change in the affairs of sir Raymond, filled the whole party with the sincerest satisfaction; but no one experienced a more heartfelt joy, than the youth himself, as it enabled him to display the disinterestedness of his regard for Eleanor, and the warmth of his friendship for her father and brother. No sooner therefore had he received the confirmation of his rights from the king (who was prevailed upon at the same time to withdraw his displeasure from de Villars and his family)

mily) than he presented his sister to Edward, giving her in dower, a very considerable tract of land immediately in the neighbourhood of de Villars's castle.

SIR Raymond then solicited the hand of Eleanor, who superior to the little artifices and affectation of false delicacy, instantly bestowed it, where her affections were already fixed.

It was now that he thought it necessary to do justice to the memory of his father by punishing the instruments of his death, and properly interring his remains. The culprits were therefore brought to trial,
and

and such as had been immediately concerned in the murder, condemned to execution. The bones of the late sir Raymond were collected, and placed with all the pomp of burial in the cemetery of the abbey; which after undergoing a lustration, and being consecrated afresh, was filled with its compliment of monks, taken from neighbouring monasteries, all men of age and piety.

Nothing was now wanting to compleat the felicity of those, on whom adversity had so long and darkly frowned.—Sir Raymond Warren and his lady took possession of Netley castle, where they lived with all
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the generous hospitality of feudal magnificence.

EDWARD and Agnes resided with the baron at his mansion; adding the venerable Gilbert, and faithful Frances to their family. Whilst de Villars, whom age and grief had been gradually bending to the grave, once more regained his health and cheerfulness, and blessed, for several years, with his society, the happy group, who transmitted to their posterity these sacred truths; THAT THERE IS NO SITUATION TO WHICH PERSECUTED VIRTUE CAN BE REDUCED, SO LOW, AS TO AUTHORISE DESPAIR; THAT THERE ARE NO CIRCUMSTANCES TO WHICH HARDENED IMPIETY

IMPIETY CAN BE RAISED, SO ELEVATED, AND SECURE, AS TO PRECLUDE THE FEAR OF DOWNFAL AND DISGRACE.

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